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MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION: 1778 Pennsylvania Ave.
7 May 1954
10:00 to 11:00 a.m.

PARTICIPANTS: USIA

Mr. George Todd, PAO
(Motion Picture), Bangkok

25X1A

CIA

General

1. Mr. Moore has been stationed 3-1/2 years in Bangkok for USIA. His first experience was in the radio media, from which he shifted to his present capacity. He describes the Embassy as a large post which has increased 50% in the last three years. He has no Americans and 20 locals on his own staff. He describes the local population as very close mouthed, particularly the local officials, who feel that anything they may say may be misunderstood by their superiors in the hierarchy of the Bangkok government.

General Description of Motion Picture Activity

2. The motion picture activity is broken into two general functions. The first is to handle the production described above and the second is to supervise distribution. The policy governing distribution is to concentrate on government officials to implement a "G-1" program, which the Ambassador describes as getting government officials off the dime and do something about the Communist threat. Of decreasing target importance are:

- a. Youth and students;
- b. Skilled workers; and
- c. Chinese businessmen.

Laborers and farmers are covered by public showings scheduled for the mobile units. In addition to showing film to the organizations among the groups indicated above, some distribution is made for commercial 35 mm. screens.

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Coordination

3. Mr. Moore states there is excellent coordination among the government agencies and within USIA (field). He says he personally does not deal with other agencies but that his superior, Mr. Weader, is in constant touch with the Ambassador and other embassy personnel. USIA people in the embassy are pulled together twice weekly for coordination of their program efforts and views on policy.

Policy

4. The most important aspect of Mr. Moore's statements with regard to policy direction was the emphasis which he placed on the role of Ambassador Donovan. He says the Ambassador is mentioned in connection with nearly every guidance type of statement uttered and that the Ambassador frequently visits personally his various activities, including Mr. Moore's activities. Previous to the coming of Ambassador Donovan the policy was to "leave controversial subjects alone," which caused the PAO program to rely heavily on pushing Americana. During this phase, however, preparations were made for a more active program and with the coming of Ambassador Donovan the program has shifted to one of action; for example, when the Communists were close to the Thai border policy dictated that the subject be left alone, whereas now the Dien Bien Phu fight is being presented to the Thai as an immediate threat to their security. Further, he states that Ambassador Donovan backs up his various activities, including PAO, so that in the case of motion pictures Mr. Moore now has excellent government contacts. This permits him to design film for government consumption. Previously he had to sit and wait for officials to request "any old film" from his film exchange.

5. With regard to attribution the policy they follow requires them to have as much propaganda published or shown with attribution not to the U.S. but to the Thai.

6. They now de-emphasize the Americana approach except where it ties in with Thai interests.

7. Another way of describing the Thai program is its breakdown into "overt" and "covert" approach. The "overt" includes the travelling shows and library program while the "covert" includes the press and picture activity fed by the U.S. to Thai officials and attributed to those officials.

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8. They have in Bangkok complete freedom to accept or reject film forwarded by Washington. Their rejections, with reasons therefor, or similarly their acceptance, serves as some field guidance to Washington.

Material Used in Program

9. Most of the motion picture material is sent out from Washington. This footage contains commercial and army material. There is no classification problem but there is a copyright problem, which arises when composites are made. At present the locus of producing material is shifting from Washington and New York to the field. With the policy of action described above, there is a need for locally produced film which uses Thai background and people. The content of the film is also shifting from documentary to documentary plus drama, and in this connection they have hired an American script writer who is now en route to Bangkok. The substance of the film might be further described as

- a. slanted toward the exposition of the "big lie;"
- b. to build up Thai pride in its own history, and
- c. to assist MSA (short films) in publicizing dam projects, roadways, agricultural know-how, etc.

Evaluation

10. Mr. Moore feels the semi-annual report, as it is presently used, includes good material on evaluation or effectiveness of the program. In addition to this, he reports weekly to the PAO on his progress, including penetration of the Thai mind.

Intelligence

11. He reads State Department intelligence surveys of Thailand and the Daily Summary of Thai press produced by the embassy's political section. I am impressed that their activity needs little intelligence in the field, as the PAO turns to the policy people for advice on the pitch of their programs--it therefore being important that the policy people have the intelligence and not the USIA group. He finds the Summary of Thai press useful as a criticism of the "Jay Carmody" type.

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